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Secure Fax

To: Mr. Paddy Teahon
From: Secretary Dermot Gallagher
Date: 18 June 1998
Pages: 1 + 3

London Report

-- Conversations with Mo Mowlam and Tony Blair

Gratef ulf you could pass a copy to Dr. Mansergh please

M.I.C.

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18 June 1998

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Second Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2

RECEIVED 23 JUN 1998

*File / papers
Mr. J. J. ...
Councillors ...
YE 18/6*

*Taoiseach
hjk
23.6.98*

Dear Secretary,

Conversations with Mo Mowlam and Tony Blair

Mo Mowlam telephoned me late last night. She said she was concerned at what she saw as emerging difficulties between the British and Irish sides; her feeling was that things were "different" in recent weeks and that there was not the same level of trust between us as before. As an instance of this she wondered whether that British Ministers were having some difficulties in arranging meetings with the Irish side. Although she herself would be seeing Minister Andrews on 7 July, they wondered whether their inability to arrange a meeting with Paul Murphy today was deliberate on our part. She thought that it would be of the utmost importance to stay close in the period ahead. * See below

I said that it was true that confidence had been dented by the handling of the Police Commission and the failure to consult adequately on the prisoners legislation. But she should not exaggerate. The Taoiseach had written to the Prime Minister outlining our views, and it was important that we explain frankly our concerns. This itself was a sign of the maturity in the relationship. (Mowlam incidentally could not recall the letter, but she put this down to the fact that she sees too many papers). I emphasised that the key thing for the future was that we be consulted properly on initiatives which lay at the heart of the process. The Irish Government could not be seen to be wrong footed on matters of such importance. As for meetings between Ministers I said that there were no problems on our side and Ministers were available as in the past,

* - Minister of Health seeing Paul Murphy on Wednesday;
- Minister meeting for 9.15.98 in hall for private overview
in early pub;
Bill ... on Thursday for further implementation of
Commitment ...

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especially if urgent matters needed discussion.

Mowlam said she was reassured by what I said and put her concern down to tiredness and congenital paranoia.

The discussion then touched on some issues of current concern.

Prisoners Legislation: Mowlam said that the Government were under pressure in Westminster but she was determined not to have her hands tied beyond the Prime Minister's "fucking pledges". She had discussed her proposed amendment (adding the words "in implementing the decommissioning section of the Belfast Agreement") with Martin McGuinness earlier in the day but did not yet have a read out from Sinn Fein. Her view was that the new wording did not change the meaning or substance of the original text and she hoped that we could live with it. The change would help the Government in the House of Lords.

Consultations: She said that when Paul Murphy sees the Minister on the margin of the Council of Europe meeting on Tuesday he will give us the proposed names for the Prisoners Review Body and the Criminal Justice Commission. There will be Irish names on both.

*in fact
Wednesday*

Schedule of Work: Mowlam said that she had just begun to look at the work programme ahead. She hoped that all the election results would be in on Friday night, the 27th, but some last seats might not be filled until Saturday morning. On current thinking she would make a public statement on Saturday afternoon welcoming the outcome, outlining certain measures that needed to be taken, and announcing a number of economic initiatives. The composition of the Prisoners Body and the Justice Commission would be announced the same day, but she was not specific as to whether or not they would be included in her own statement. The Shadow Assembly would meet in Castle Buildings on Tuesday the 30th "so that the members could start earning their pay". She said that she still intends to move the Shadow Assembly into Stormont, and she hopes that Sinn Fein will live with this. Her view is that the drama will have been taken out of the matter by the time the move to Stormont takes place. The media focus will be on the opening session and the early meetings, and that the move would occur "after Gerry and Martin have been televised endlessly going in and out of Castle Buildings."

She said that she would be working on the schedule and future initiatives in

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coming days and would contact us again on them over the weekend. She herself intends to take a few days break at the beginning of next week and hopes to return refreshed for the elections and the marching season about which she is deeply worried.

Comment

I think our concerns about consultation have registered. When I met Blair in Downing Street on Saturday the first thing he said was that he knew that we were "sore" over the Police Commission and the prisoners legislation. He tried to justify their proceeding on both issues by pointing to the need to support Trimble and maximise the pro-Agreement vote within the UUP - "without that everything will fail." I said that our main point was not that they had gone ahead but that they had failed to consult adequately and that problems could be avoided if both sides discussed issues at an early stage. He acknowledged the point.

Yours sincerely,



Ted Barrington
Ambassador